

Impact Evaluation on Terrestrial Ecology – Animals and Plants

The purpose of the study is to determine if changes in TVA's reservoir system operating policies would produce greater overall public value.

Background

TVA is conducting a formal evaluation of its policies for operating the Tennessee River reservoir system, including an analysis of the economic impacts of any potential changes in these policies. Existing policies affect how reservoir levels fluctuate, when changes in reservoir levels occur, and the amount of water flowing through the reservoir system at different times of the year, depending on rainfall.

The purpose of the study is to determine if changes in TVA's reservoir system operating policies would produce greater overall public value. Technical analyses will be performed to evaluate the impacts of TVA's current policies and the potential impacts of alternatives on a number of resource areas and other issues.

The two-year Reservoir Operations study (ROS) is scheduled for completion in October 2003.

The impacts on terrestrial ecology will be evaluated as part of the ROS, and the results will be documented in an environmental impact statement (EIS). TVA will conduct the study in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

Potential Impacts

- TVA has identified a number of terrestrial plant and animal communities that are dependent upon current reservoir conditions, or are otherwise associated with the river system. These communities could be affected by operational changes.
- The terrestrial ecology portion of the ROS will assess existing information on plant and animal communities located within close geographic proximity to TVA's reservoir system, and will evaluate potential environmental impacts of the current operating policies, as well as the potential impacts of policy changes on these resources.
- The potential for impacts will be assessed for each watershed.

Geographic Areas

- For most terrestrial animal and plant communities, the area to be evaluated will include all of the Tennessee River system within one-quarter mile of the maximum zone of reservoir influence. The area may be expanded on a case-by-case basis.

Scope of Analysis

- The evaluation will look at ways in which each alternative could change flows, water temperature, dissolved oxygen levels, and other habitat characteristics, and the effects those changes could have on the biological functions of animal and plant communities associated with the reservoir system.

For More Information

To submit comments or get additional information, members of the public are invited to visit TVA's Web site at www.tva.com, to call toll-free 888-882-7675, to fax TVA at 865-632-3146, or to write to ROS Project Manager David Nye, Tennessee Valley Authority, c/o WT 11A, 400 West Summit Hill Dr., Knoxville, TN 37902.